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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

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Cathedral - Church

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St. P A U L,

On MONDAY, *January* 26. 17⁷²₁₃.

A T T H E

Anniversary Meeting of the Gentlemen
Educated at St. PAUL's School.

By JOHN LENG, B. D.

Rector of *Bedington* in *Surrey*.

Bp of Norwich

Publiſh'd at the Request of the Stewards.

L O N D O N,

Printed by B. MILLS, for R. KNAPLOCK, at the
Bishop's-Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1713.

SERMON

Preached at the

Cathedral - Church

of

St. Paul's

On Monday, January 17th



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Rector of Bevington in Surrey

Printed by J. Smith, St. Paul's Church-yard

Printed by B. Mills, at R. Knappock's, in St.
Andrew-Hall, at St. Paul's Church-yard, 1718.

TO MY
Honoured FRIENDS *and* SCHOOL-FELLOWS,
THE
STEWARDS
OF
St. Paul's School-Feast :

Mr. Samuel Gale,	}	Mr. Gabriel Neve,
Tho. Gill, Esq;		Mr. Nath. Blanford,
Mr. Tho. Trenchfeild,		Robert Cooke, Esq;
Mr. Joseph Goddard,		Mr. Daniel Wilcocks.

This SERMON, which was Published at
their Request,

Is humbly Dedicated.

TO MY
 Honoured Friends and School-Fellows,
 THE
 STEWARDS
 OF
 St. Paul's School-Library.

Mr. Daniel Gale,	Mr. Daniel Gale,
Mr. Gill, Esq;	Mr. Nath. Blagden,
Mr. Tho. Trenchard,	Robert Cook, Esq;
Mr. Joseph Goddard,	Mr. Daniel W. Weeks,

This sermon, which was published
 their request,
 is hereby dedicated.

A
S E R M O N.

I CORINTH. xii. 31.

But covet earnestly the best Gifts: And yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way.

SAINTE Paul, in this Chapter, discoursing at Large concerning Spiritual Gifts, *that is*, concerning those miraculous Powers of the Holy Ghost, which were, in a plentiful manner, bestowed upon the First Age of the Church (not only to supply the Defect of more natural, and human Means of Planting Christianity in the World, but also to be an Evidence of its Divine Original, and the Power of GOD accompanying it) shews, That the several Kinds of these Gifts were all from the same Holy Spirit: And though they were differently dispos'd of, both as to the Kind of Gifts, and the Degrees of them, to different Persons, yet they were all designed to the same great End, the common Edification of the Mystical Body of CHRIST, which consists of divers Members, as the Natural Body of a Man does; which though they have not all the same Office, but serve to different Purposes, yet all ought to have the same Care one for another: And as the several Members of the Natural Body all tend to the mutual Decency,

Ver. 7. cency, Service, and Assistance of each other, and of the whole, so the different Orders of Men in the Church, and those that were assisted with different Gifts and Powers of the Holy Ghost, as *Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Workers of Miracles*, those that had the Gifts of *Healing Diseases*, or of *Speaking* divers kinds of Languages, or of Interpretation of *Tongues*, were all design'd by GOD, and furnish'd with these Abilities, for the general Benefit of the whole, and whatever were the particular *Manifestations of the SPIRIT given to any Man, they were given him to profit withal*; that is, to be beneficial to the Publick according to his Capacity.

Ch. xiv. 6. IT appears, by divers Passages in this Epistle, that there were several Divisions and Contentions among the *Corinthians*, upon Account of these Spiritual Gifts, as well as upon Account of the different Abilities of their Teachers, and some of them were *pust up for one against another*; and it seems probable, that the Gift of *Tongues* was what they set a mighty Value upon, and despised others in comparison of it, because the Apostle sets himself more earnestly to correct this Mistake, and to prefer *Propheying*, and *Interpretation*, or *Teaching* Things intelligible far before it; that so those might not be discourag'd, who had receiv'd such Gifts as made less outward Appearance; nor those *pust up*, who had such as made greater; since both were the Gifts of the same Spirit, dividing to every Man, severally, according to His good Pleasure, and so tempering them, that all should have their proper Use, and help to make up the Perfection of the whole, as *those Members of the Body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary*.

BUT now, though all these Spiritual Gifts were in their several Kinds useful, and none of them to be despised, yet because some were more excellent than other, as tending more to Publick Edification, therefore, the Apostle advises them in the Text, to desire, or *covet*

earnestly those that were *Best*, not those that made the greatest Shew, but those that were of the most universal Benefit to others, according as he afterwards directs them. *For as much as ye are zealous of Spiritual Gifts,* Ch. xiv. *seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.* And ^{12.} by this he leads them on to pursue that which was greater, and more excellent, than all these Gifts put together, and without which, they would be all very insignificant, and that is *Charity*; of which, he discourses at Large in the next Chapter, to which the Words of the Text are an Introduction.

AND to make them suitable to the present Occasion, let it be consider'd, that although the supernatural and miraculous Gifts, of which the Apostle here speaks, are long since ceas'd in the Church, the Necessity of them being superseded by the Opportunity of more natural Means; yet the Exhortation here us'd, of *Coveting earnestly the best Gifts*, may, very reasonably, be transfer'd to that Care and Diligence, which we ought to use, in procuring those more natural Abilities of edifying the Christian Community, which now succeed in the Room of those Miraculous ones; and which may properly be termed Gifts of GOD, as proceeding from those Endowments of Mind, and Opportunities of improving them, which GOD gives, and which, He designs, that we should employ to His Honour, and the Good of our Brethren, as much as if they were more miraculous. And among these, there are Two, which the Apostle also mentions in this Chapter, as being then more immediately infus'd by the Spirit of GOD, which are still necessary, especially to such as hold any Place of Authority, or Government in the Church, which depend, partly upon our own natural Abilities, assisted by the Spirit of GOD, and partly upon such Learning, Experience, and Observation, as it is in our own Power, under the common Influence of the same Spirit upon every honest Mind, to procure, and cultivate.

tivate: These are the *Word of Wisdom*, and the *Word of Knowledge*, one of which may denote Prudence and Discretion, in the Management of our selves, and our Affairs; the other, a large and comprehensive Understanding of the Nature of Things both natural and spiritual; and because the procuring of these, and the like Qualifications, at least to some Degree, is more in our own Power, therefore we ought to use the more Industry and Diligence, about it.

The Text consisting of Two Parts; an Exhortation to be *earnestly desirous* of the *Best Gifts*, and a Proposal of something far *more excellent*, which was design'd to be describ'd in the following Chapter, I shall, accordingly, endeavour to speak to these Two Things.

I. *THAT it is the Duty of every Christian, to be desirous of Attaining such Abilities, and careful of Improving such Advantages, as GOD has afforded him, of being useful and beneficial to the Publick.*

II. *THAT above all these Gifts or Abilities, there is one Thing far more excellent, and of more universal Concern to all Men, and that is CHARITY, or the Love of our Neighbour, which every One ought to pursue, and without which, all other Attainments signify nothing.*

I. *THAT it is the Duty of every Christian, to be desirous of Attaining such Abilities, and careful of Improving such Advantages, as GOD has afforded him, of being useful and beneficial to the Publick.* This is what may properly enough be imply'd, in *coveting earnestly the Best Gifts*. And in speaking to this Point, I shall not confine myself barely to those Attainments in Knowledge, which usually pass under the Name of Learning, a good Measure of which is of absolute Necessity to some Professions, and of great Advantage to all that are of any Consideration.

ration, as this Audience is ready to testify, by their solemn Meeting together upon this Occasion ; nor shall I speak to that particular Kind only, of edifying the Church, which is justly expected from such as minister in Holy Things ; I shall rather endeavour to speak more generally, of all those useful Improvements of the Mind, which have their Foundation in a liberal Education, and are cultivated by Care and Diligence, 'till they make a Man capable of being a beneficial Member of the Publick, in a Way suited to his Genius, and becoming his Profession, or Station in the World. And in this comprehensive Sense of *coveting the Best Gifts*, I hope, we shall, most of us, think our selves concern'd, since it is not an high Rank, or great Figure in the outward Appearance of the World, that we are here exhorted to follow after ; but a Capacity of doing the most Good we can, in the Station we are in ; for, though the Apostle prefers some of the Gifts, which he mentions in this Chapter, before others, as being of more universal Benefit, yet he does not, thereby, design, that those of less Value should be despis'd, as unnecessary ; *For the Eye cannot say to the Hand, I have no Need of thee ; nor again, the Head to the Feet, I have no Need of you.* All the Members of the Body are necessary, in their proper Place, *And, if they were all one Member, where were the Body ?* All cannot be Apostles, or Prophets, or Teachers, or Workers of Miracles, but yet, all may endeavour to excel in their proper Place : And he that excels in a low Station, is in Truth, a much more valuable Person, than he, that is plac'd in an higher, to which he is not Equal. So that *Coveting the best Gifts*, does not imply, that every Man should desire, or importunately seek after Places of Authority, or Preheminence, tho' such Places may afford the greatest Opportunities of doing Good ; and excelling to the Publick Edification, when they are fill'd by such as are well qualify'd for them ; but it certainly implies, that we should use all our Industry

Ver. 21.

Ver. 19.

Rom. xii.
6.

to fill that Station of Life well, in which the Providence of GOD has plac'd us, and as this Apostle to the Romans expresses it, *Having Gifts different according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophesy according to the Proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministering; or he that teacheth, on Teaching; he that exhorteth, on Exhortation, he that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity; he that ruleth, with Diligence.* Every different State, or Profession, requires different Talents and Abilities, which a Man ought to make himself Master of, when he enters upon it, that he may adorn it well, or else, he cannot reasonably hope to receive any real Honour from it: That is the *Best Gift* to every Man, which is fittest for him, and of which he can make the best Use.

AND this Consideration should be an Admonition to all Parents, and Others, who have the Oversight of the different Parts, and Capacities of young Persons, to endeavour chiefly to improve them in such Kinds of Study, as their natural Genius best fits them for, and to direct them to such Arts, and Professions, as their peculiar Talents give the greatest Probability of excelling in; and they that have Understanding to choose for themselves would do well to consider, that such a Calling, or Course of Life, will always be most for their Honour, which is best proportion'd to their Abilities, to their natural, and acquir'd Endowments, tho' of it self, it be not of the greatest Dignity, for they will then be set in the most advantageous Light, when they give a Lustre to the Place they possess, by their Merit, and not when they are obscur'd by the Splendour of it.

THERE is, indeed, in all Minds, that are not quite sunk into Brutality, a natural Desire of Distinction, or of excelling in some Kind or other, which, if well employ'd, and duly cultivated, might produce excellent

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lent Fruits, and highly useful to Virtue and Religion, as well as to the Advantage, and Ornament of the Common-Wealth; but the Mischief is, that too many Men love to be distinguish'd by Priority of Place, and such Posts of Eminence, as should be the Reward of Virtue, rather than by such Virtues and Endowments, as should fit them for those Places; and this frequently makes their Ambition troublesome, and mischievous to the World, and very often dishonourable to themselves; as making a greater Discovery of their Vices and Imperfections, than a lower Station could have done. And they are taken Notice of, rather as Blemishes, than Ornaments, of the Publick; and all the Value that is put upon them, is rather a Fear of their Power to do Mischief, than a Reverence of their Power to do Good, which their Place might give them; but they know not how to use it. Whereas, if Mens Ambition to excel, were well directed, if they were bent upon being eminent in Virtue, aspiring more after those good Qualities, which might enable them to discharge their present Offices with Reputation to themselves, and Benefit to others, than after higher Places, which may prove above their Abilities, if they would but think modestly, and justly of themselves, and endeavour to have those Virtues, which they would appear to have, they would then be useful Members of the Community, the Publick would receive the Advantage, and themselves the Credit of such a virtuous, and laudable Ambition.

IT is not without good Reason, that St. Paul makes this Preface to the fore-mention'd Advice, wherein he recommended to every Man the faithful Discharge of his particular Office, *I say, through the Grace given unto me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as GOD hath dealt to every Man the measure of* Rom.xii.

B 2 Faith.

Ver. 4, 5. *Faith.* For as we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the same Office: So we being many are one Body in CHRIST, and every one Members one of another. The best Way to excel in our several Stations, is, first not to overvalue our own Worth; but by Diligence, and Industry in our proper Callings, to make our selves useful Members of the Body to which we belong, and consequently, valuable to it in our Place, though it be of an inferiour Rank: This will give us a more lasting good Name, and make us appear brighter in the Eyes of all impartial Judges, than the highest Advancement, when it is beyond our Merit; for, our Deserts will be better view'd, if they are above both our Station, and our own Opinion, than when they fall below it; and it is a much more honourable, and distinguishing Question to be ask'd, concerning any Man, why he is not prefer'd, than why he is? Not that it is absolutely unlawful, or inconsistent with a modest Opinion of a Man's self, ever to seek any Advancement in a fair, and honest Way, provided our first, and principal Care be to make our selves worthy of it, by doing Credit to a lower Station, and improving our selves in such worthy Qualities, as may fit us to do more Good in an higher. What St. Paul says of the Office of a Bishop, may, in some Sense, be adapted to all Kinds of Advancement, *He that desires it, desires a good Work*; that is, a Matter of Business, and Labour, as well as of Credit, and Reputation; and therefore, he ought to be well qualify'd for the Work, before he seek the Honour of it: And, if together with the Testimony of his own Conscience, that he sincerely desires the Benefit of others, he have the Approbation of such, as are able to judge, that his Abilities deserve Promotion to a more Eminent Office, he may, without Scruple, accept of it, when the Providence of GOD opens a fair Way to it, and he

2 Tim. iii.
1.

he may then, with good Reason, hope, that GOD will bless his honest Endeavours in the Discharge of it. That Prayer of Solomon, upon his Advancement to the Throne of Israel, for an *Understanding Heart*, to *judge the People, that he might discern between Good and Bad*, was highly pleasing to GOD ALMIGHTY, and procur'd for him, all those external Advantages of Riches and Honour, and a large Dominion, which he had not petition'd for: And if we could be persuaded to take the same Course, and make it our principal Study, and Prayer to GOD, that we may obtain Wisdom, and Understanding, to conduct our selves aright, in that State of Life which He assigns us, we might safely leave the Assignment of it to His Providence. If together with the earnest Pursuit of that Wisdom and Knowledge, which the same Solomon so frequently recommends to us, we would, also, take his Advice, of *Trusting to the Lord, with all our Heart, and not lean to our own Understanding; but in all our Ways acknowledge Him, He would direct our Paths*: And this would be the Way, to find Favour, and good Understanding in the Sight of GOD and Man. If it did not advance us to an high Place, it would, however, recommend us to the Love and Esteem, both of GOD, and all good Men, which is a more valuable Promotion.

I HAVE insisted on this, the rather, though it may seem a Digression, because it is but too common a Practice, for Men to overvalue their own Merit, and to expect some distinguishing Reward for such Attainments, as more impartial Judges may have but a mean Opinion of; and to think themselves neglected, when their unreasonable Expectations are not answer'd. Again, some Mens Ambition has, perhaps, from their Infancy, taken a wrong Turn, and been taught only to admire outward Pomp and Greatness, and to think them

1 Kings
iii. 9.

Prov. iii.
5, 6.

Ver. 4.

them the chief End and Perfection of all Virtue and good Qualities, as if the Improvements of the Mind were of no Use, but to improve our Fortune. And because that has been, sometimes, propos'd as a secondary Motive, to encourage their Industry, they inconsiderately look upon it as the chief, or it may be, the only one. Now such Men having no true Notion of what is excellent, can never be induc'd to pursue it steadily. 'Till Men are persuaded, that Virtue it self is a desirable Thing, even abstracted from those worldly Advantages, which sometimes follow it; and that Learning, and Knowledge, and all useful Accomplishments of the Mind, are more valuable, for their enabling us to exercise our Reason well, and qualifying us to do the greatest Good to Others, than for those outward Appendages of Profit or Honour, which they sometime procure us, they will never be zealous of attaining the *Best Gifts*: Whereas, if we did principally consider our selves, as Members of Society, both Civil and Sacred, as we are Men, and as we are Christians, we should find our selves oblig'd to study the Publick Benefit according to our best Capacities, and consequently, to improve those Capacities to the utmost, from the Considerations both of Reason, and Religion. For,

I. REASON teaches us, That as we were by Nature made for Society, and are without it the most indigent, and helpless of all Creatures, so our greatest Perfection consists in those Qualities, which best fit us for it. And he acts most up to the Dignity of his Nature, who does most for the common Benefit of Mankind, and that this is also the Common Sense of Mankind in all Nations, appears by this, that they have generally done Honour to the Name and Memory of such, as have been Eminent Instruments of *Publick Good*, either by first *Forming* them into *Society*, and *Civilizing* their

Manners,

Manners, and Building Cities for Habitation and Protection, or by wisely framing Good Laws and Rules of Living, whereby their Social Happiness has been establish'd; or by Valour and Good Conduct securing them from Danger, and protecting them from Injustice; or by inventing and teaching Useful Arts and Sciences, whereby the Conveniences of Life have been improv'd. For every Man reaps Benefit by these good Effects of SOCIETY, and the very least he can do in Requital for it, is to express some Sense of Gratitude towards the Instruments of such Publick Benefaction; but if he would reason, as he ought to do, he would think himself obliged to contribute according to his Power, to the Publick Benefit likewise; for with what Justice can he otherwise claim a Share in it? An Useless Member, that contributes nothing, either to the Necessity, or Ornament of the Body, is, indeed, no Member; but fit only to be cut off as an Excrecence. This Consideration would teach us, that it is a Duty we owe to the Publick, to be always Improving our Abilities to the most Useful Purposes. But, as is often said, but

2. RELIGION carries this Matter yet further, and by teaching us, That we are Members of a more Heavenly Society, as Christians, than what we were by Nature born to, as Men, enforces our Obligation to do all the Good we can, in our several Stations, as living Members of the Mystical Body of CHRIST. This is the main Design of this whole Chapter, of which my Text is the Conclusion, wherein though the Apostle speaks of such Gifts, as were then bestow'd in a miraculous Way, yet the Directions given for the Using of them, are common to such as are obtain'd by Education, Study, or Industry, or any other way; and there is nothing so frequent in all the Writings of our Apostle as this Argument, that we are Members of CHRIST, and Members of each other, to persuade us to the Practice of

of almost every Vertue, and to the Improvement of every Grace. The Gospel is so far from setting us at Liberty, as to the Improving, or Neglecting any Ability, or Opportunity put into our Hands for the common Benefit, that on the contrary, it shews us, how every Gift, whether of Mind, or Body, or Fortune, or Station in the World, is a Talent committed to our Trust, by GOD, to traffick withal, and to improve for the Publick Good, and that we shall be accountable for the Neglect of it, and shall be reputed wicked Servants, if we return him not his own with Usury. *All Members, indeed, have not the same Office, every Man having his proper Gift of GOD; But the Increase of the Body is made according to the effectual Working of every Part, it is compacted together by that which every Joint supplieth; and every one is bound to supply something.*

Eph. iv. 16. Hence it is, that we are all forbidden to be slothful in *Business*, and enjoined to *maintain Good Works for necessary Uses, that we be not unfruitful*; that is, to have some honest Profession, or Employment, whereby we may be useful, and beneficial to others. We are all to do good according to our best Capacity, that *We may adorn the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things. Whatsoever Things are creditable, and of good Report, if there be any Vertue, or any Praise, we should think on such Things, and study to excel in them.* We are to *Let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our Good Works, and glorify our Father, which is in Heaven.* To do good, is the great End, to which all our Abilities should be directed. And this leads me to consider,

II. THE Second Part of my Text, which implies, *That above all these Gifts and Abilities, there is one Thing far more Excellent, and of more Universal Concern to all Men, and that is CHARITY, or the Love of our Neighbour; which every one ought to pursue, and without which,*

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all our other Attainments signify nothing. The Nature and Excellency of it is at Large described in the following Chapter; and I shall not undertake, nor would the Time allow me, to speak of all the several Properties and Acts of *Charity*: I am only at present to consider the Thing in general, as it is the Great Principle of Christian Life, *The End of the Commandment*, as St. Paul ^{1 Tim.i.5.} calls it; that is, the main Design of the Evangelical Doctrine, *The Bond of Perfectness*, and *the Fulfilling of the Law*. ^{Col.iii.14. Rom.xiii.10.} It is that Noble Inclination of the Mind, which constantly disposes us to *Love our Neighbour as our selves* (the Doing of which St. James calls the *Royal Law*) enlarging our Good Will beyond all Narrow and Selfish Designs, looking upon our selves as only a Part of the whole, and not having any separate Interests distinct from, much less contrary to the common Good, making our selves really of that Body, whereof the Mem- ^{1 Cor.xii.25.} bers should have the same Care one for another, and whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or one Member be honour'd, all the Members rejoice with it. The Excellency of this Grace, or Vertue, above all other Endowments of the Mind, whether natural, or acquired, will appear from the following Considerations.

1. **THAT** the Attainment of it is open to all Ranks, and Professions of Men.
2. **THAT** it is of Universal Influence in all Circumstances of Life.
3. **THAT** it makes all our other Gifts and Endowments useful to us.
4. **THAT** it never faileth; but will endure for ever, when all other Gifts cease.

1. **THAT** the Attainment of it is open to all Ranks, and Professions of Men. This may, indeed, at first seem no great Commendation of its Excellency, those Things being

being usually most valu'd, which fewest are capable of Attaining. But in this Case it is otherwise, for it being necessary for all Men, and a Defect in it chargeable upon every one as a Crime, no Man must be excluded from the Possibility of having it. If we consider it as a Gift of the Spirit of GOD, it is such a Gift, as He will deny to none, that faithfully, and diligently seek it. Other Gifts, both Ordinary and Extraordinary, are diversly bestow'd; to one this, and to another that, according to the good Pleasure of the Donour; no one can enjoy all of them, nor is it necessary he should, so long as each Member of the Body has but what is proper for him, towards his Share of the Common Edification. We are encourag'd to desire the *Best Gifts*, and to improve what we have, and it may be, *the most excellent Way*, even to procure these at the Hand of GOD; or however, to improve them is first to begin with the Pursuit of *Charity*; but whether we have more or less of these Gifts, this we must have if we be Christians. *Spiritual Gifts* we may desire, but *Charity* we must follow after. To love our Neighbours as our selves, may, indeed, seem difficult to such as consider themselves separately; and to arise to Perfection in it, may at first have Difficulty enough to make it excellent, even in that sense; But to those who only look upon themselves, as Children of that Great Family, whereof GOD ALMIGHTY, who careth for all alike, is the Great Father and Governour; and as Members of that Body, whereof CHRIST is the Head, this will appear no unreasonable Law, or Command; but the best Bond that can be of such an Holy Society. And the more Universal it is, the more will its Excellency appear. But,

2. CHARITY is of *Universal Influence in all Circumstances of Life*. Whatever our Condition be, it teaches us

us how to behave our selves in it, as we ought, with regard to others. It is the best Foundation, not only of Inward Vertue and Innocence, but even of the Outward Ornament of them in respect of our Conversation with Men, Decency, and Good Manners: And will, in many Cases, supply the want of Education and good Breeding; or to use the modern Phrase, it will make a Man a more Compleat Gentleman, than all other Accomplishments without it. And therefore, St. Paul describes it, by the most lovely, and becoming Practice of all Social Vertues, of which it is the most sure and lasting Principle. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envyeth not, Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoyceth not in Iniquity; but rejoyceth in the Truth, beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things.* He that has this Vertue will know how to demean himself in all Conditions.

3. *IT makes all our other Gifts useful to us*, which without it are nothing worth, as being neither of that Advantage to the World, nor that Benefit to our selves. If *Charity* have not the Direction of our *Gifts*, they may prove a Mischief, rather than a Good, both to our selves, and others. What St. Paul says of *Knowledge*, may be said also of divers other less valuable Accomplishments, that *they puff up*; and by that Means they draw Men into a Snare, and do hurt; but *Charity edifyeth*, or makes them all useful to the Common Good. Riches, and Honour, and Power, and Learning, and Policy, and Dexterity in Business, and Wit, and good Parts, and the like, may be Instruments of great Mischief, if they are ill-apply'd, and will make our Doom the heavier for the undue Application of them. And even the most spiritual, or miraculous Gifts, how
C 2 excellent

excellent-foever, though they may by the Providence of GOD, become beneficial to others, yet without *Charity*, will in Conclusion profit those nothing that possess them. *Though I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal; Though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing; nay, though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* These two last Particulars, of giving all our Substance, and laying down our Lives, may be sometimes Instances of the most exalted Charity, and they are in Scripture taken Notice of as such, when done for Love of the Brethren; but yet the Apostle supposes, that they may be done upon other Principles separate from *Charity*, and then they are good for nothing. Every Thing we do upon this Principle is acceptable to GOD, and without it nothing can be so.

1 Pet. i. 7. And therefore, St. Peter adds this after a Train of other Vertues, as the Perfection of them all; and St. Paul recommends it, as that which should have the most general Influence in all our Actions, *Let all your Things be done with Charity.*

1 Cor. xvi. 14.

4. THE last Instance of its Excellence, which I shall mention, is, *that It never faileth; but will endure when all other Gifts cease, as being of no further Use. Prophecies shall fail, as having received their Accomplishment. Tongues shall cease, when there shall be no more Occasion for different Languages. Knowledge shall vanish away: That small Knowledge, which is only in Part, shall be abolish'd, by a more distinct, and extensive View of Things. Even Faith, and Hope, will then have no Place; but be chang'd into*

into Sight, and Fruition. But *Charity* will then be in its greatest Exaltation; the Society, of which we shall then be Members, will be all of one Heart, and of one Soul. And that which is the Perfection of all other Graces and Virtues in this Life, will be also the Perfection of our Happiness in the next. The Love of our Brethren will give us an Interest in their Joys, and make us partake in every Degree of Glory, that shall be conferred on them for ever.

THUS I have endeavoured to shew, both how we are to *covet earnestly the Best Gifts*, and also how the *Way of Charity* is yet *more excellent* than all of them.

App. WHAT I have further to add, is, only very briefly to Apply the Design of my Discourse to the present Purpose, in these two following Inferences.

I. WE may from hence see, *What Value we ought to put upon a good Education*. We have not now those miraculous Gifts, which the first Christians had; but we have something in Lieu of them, which most of them wanted, and which they endeavoured to procure, as soon as their Circumstances would give them Leave. This is now one of the best Gifts, next to the Divine Assistance of the Spirit of GOD, that we are ordinarily capable of, as it is a Means of improving our natural Abilities to the best Purposes, by laying a Foundation both of Religion and good Literature. And I hope, we are all here met together, with Hearts truly thankful to GOD, the Author of so great a Blessing, and full of Gratitude towards our Parents, or other Benefactors, who were Instruments in procuring it for us; and sensible of our Obligation to the Memory of those, whose Care

and Diligence administred it to us. And blessed be GOD, through the Faithfulness of that worthy Company, to whose Trust our Religious Founder committed the Oversight of this Matter, there has not been wanting a Succession of Men, well qualify'd to discharge this weighty Employment. And give me Leave to remind you, that our Gratitude for this Blessing will be best exprest, by improving well upon that Foundation which was laid in our Youth, and answering the Ends of our Education, by becoming more useful Members of the Publick, and doing Credit to our several Stations, by Integrity and Diligence in our Calling, adding some Reputation to our particular Professions: But chiefly, by stirring up, and cultivating those Seeds of Piety and Virtue, which were sown in our tender Minds, *Continuing in the Things which we have learned, and so giving our selves to them, that our Profiting may appear unto all, and may adorn our common Profession, as Christians.* And the more to shew what Esteem we put upon our own Happiness, in having had an Useful and Virtuous Education, let us endeavour all we can to procure the like for Others. 'Tis the best Gift we can bestow upon them, and most likely to do Good to the Publick, both in Church and State, by encreasing the Number of useful Members in both; and most for our own Honour, since it will make the Generations to come, *rise up, and call us Blessed.*

II. FROM what has been said, concerning the Excellency of CHARITY, we may see the great End, to which we ought to direct all our Attainments, and what ought to be the moving Principle of all our Actions. Every Profession, as it serves this great End, is useful, and that which advances it the most, is most excellent. Every Gift and Endowment, is to be

be esteemed by this Measure, and without this, all our other Gifts are nothing worth: Let it, therefore, be our chief Care, to improve daily in this Grace, 'till a Spirit of universal Love and good Will influence all our Actions; that so, instead of that bitter Zeal and Contention, for our several Parties and Factions, which has almost eat up the Practice of Primitive Christianity, a Zeal to do Good, and to promote each Others Happiness, may revive among us. And I am willing to hope, that such publick friendly Assemblies as this, may, in some Measure, contribute to reconcile Mens Affections, soften their Tempers, and sweeten their Behaviour, towards each Other; may revive Ancient Friendships, and remove all Misunderstandings, which are too apt to destroy that Candour and Benignity, which Charity teaches us towards all Men. Let then, the only Provocation we give, be to *provoke one another to Love and good Works; and let every one please his Neighbour for his Good, to Edification.*

TO Conclude,

SINCE the Place of our EDUCATION, is honoured with the Name of that Great Apostle, who in all his Writings, and especially, throughout this whole Epistle, has amply described all the several Branches of this Grace, making it the Soul and Center of all Virtues, and who in his Life and Actions, shewed the most ardent and unwearied Zeal, in practising all the Kinds and Instances of it, that any mortal Man ever did, *Not seeking his own Profit; but the Profit of many, that they might be saved;*
Let

Let this Consideration, I beseech you, have some Influence upon us all, to be Followers of him, as he, also, was of CHRIST.

AND do Thou, O LORD, who hast taught us, that all our Doings without Charity are nothing worth, send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our Hearts, that most Excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace, and of all Vertues, without which, whosoever liveth, is counted dead before Thee; Grant this for Thine Only Son JESUS CHRIST's Sake.



TO CONCLUDE
SINCE the Place of a RECAPITULATION is
nearly filled with the substance of the
former Discourse, I shall not attempt to
renew with the same length, but shall
endeavour to express the chief things
which I have said, in a few words.
The chief thing which I have said, is
that we should be Followers of him, as
he was of CHRIST. And who is he?
He is the Son of God, who has
redeemed us from all iniquity, and
purified unto himself a peculiar people,
zealous of good works. And who is
he? He is the Son of Man, who has
come to save that which was lost.

FINIS.